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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

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R 201318Z AUG 74
FM AMEMBASSY LISBON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 297
INFO AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES
AMCONSUL LUANDA
AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA
AMCONSUL OPORTO
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LISBON 3547

USUN FOR AMB SCOTT

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PO
SUBJ: PRESS WORKING IN TANDEM WITH GOP TO CLEANSE
NEWSPAPERS OF FAR LEFTISTS

REF: A) LISBON 3299; B) LISBON 3392; C) LISBON 3322,
D) LISBON 3330

SUMMARY: AFTER WEEKS OF THREATENING TO ACT AGAINST REGIME'S
FAR LEFT CRITICS, GOP HAS NOW MOVED FRONTALLY TO
ELIMINATE THORN-IN-SIDE JOURANLISTS IN LISBON DAILY
PRESS. GOP APPARENTLY RECEIVING COOPERATION OF PRESS'
EDITORIAL MANGEMENT IN ACCOMPLISHING "CLEANSING"
OPERATION. PCP SUPPORTS MOVE TO SILENCE ELEMENTS IT
CONSIDERS ITS DEADLY ENEMIES. END SUMMARY.

1. GOP'S SMALL NUMBER OF FAR LEFT CRITICS HAVE OPERATED
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UNDER ASSUMPTION THAT POST-APRIL 25 LIBERTIES INCLUDED

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FREEDOM TO CRITICIZE BROADLY (IF IRRESPONSIBLY)
ELEMENTS CONSTITUTING CURRENT PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT
AS WELL AS SEVERAL OF GOVERNMENT'S CHIEF POLICIES. FAR
LEFT ACCORDINGLY HAS DENOUNCED SPINOLA AND NATIONAL
SALVATION JUNTA, HAS REFRAINED FROM HEAPING ENCOMIUMS
ON SACROSANCT ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT (DE RIGEUR FOR ALL
RESPECTABLE PARTICIPATS IN POLITICAL PROCESS), HAS
CHALLENGED BONA FIDES OF GOP'S PROCLAIMED POLICY OF
DECOLONIZATION, HAS SUPPORTED STRIKES, HAS DENOUNCED
PCP'S COLLABORATION WITH CLASS ENEMIES IN BREAKING STRIKES
AND, MOST SERIOUSLY OF ALL, HAS CHALLENGED MILITARY'S
RIGHT TO DETERMINE HOW RANKS IN ARMED FORCES WILL
BEHAVE AND WHO ORDINARY SOLDIERS WILL LISTEN TO. JUNTA'S
MOVE SUSPENDING THREE LISBON DAILIES (REF A) REPRESENTED
CULMINATION IN SERIES OF ACTIONS AIMED AT FAR LEFT CRITICS
BY INDIRECT MEANS. GOP HAS NOT (YET) FORMALLY BANNED
STREET RAILLIES BY FAR LEFT, BUT HAS PROHIBITED MRPP
RALLY (REF B) AND HAS SOUGHT TO DISCOURAGE MEDIA FROM
REPORTING SUCH EVENTS. IN RECENT DAYS GOP HAS TAKEN
MORE DIRECT MEASURES AGAINST ONE FAR LEFT NEWSPAPER.

2. INITIAL DIRECT MOVE INVOLVED INDEFINITE SUSPENSION
OF LUTA POPULAR, ORGAN OF MAOIST MRPP. PRESS REACTION TO
SUSPENSION HAS BEEN LIMITED TO BRIEF REPORTS OF FACT OF
SUSPENSION AND EQUALLY BRIEF MENTION OF ARREST IN LISBON
AND OPORTO OF FIVE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO COMMITTED INJUDICIOUS
ACT OF SELLING BACK COPIESOF JOURNAL. SOCIALIST PARTY
(PSP) HAS ISSUED STATEMENT VOICING ITS UNEASE AT
THIS ACTION; PCP'S CLANDESTINE RADIO FREE PORTUGAL HAS
ENDORSED SUSPENSION ORDER, LINKING FAR LEFT WITH FAR
RIGHT AS ENEMIES OF UNITY OF PORTUGUESE MASSES WITH ARMED FORCES
MOVEMENT.

3. SECOND "DIRECT" MOVE NOW BEING EXECUTED THROUGH
MEANS OF PRESS' EDITORIAL MANAGERS. THREE FAR LEFT
JOURNALISTS AT DIARIO DE LISBOA, WHOSE COLUMNS HAVE HERETO-
FORE BEEN NOTEWORTHY FOR "MAOIST" SLANT, HAVE BEEN SACKED.
(FIRINGS OSTENSIBLY ARE FOR REASON OF INDISCIPLINE AND
LACK OF DILIGENCE.) ORGANIZED "PROGRESSIVE JOURNALISTS"
HAVE DENOUNCED FIRINGS AND CHARGE THEY ARE ONLY OPENING
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SALVO IN CAMPAIGN TO BE CONDUCTED AMONG ALL LISBON
NEWSPAPERS AIMED AGAINST FAR LEFTISTS. IN CONVERSATION
WITH EMBOFF, INDEPENDENT JOURANLIST NOT ASSOCIATED WITH
PROGRESSIVES AGREED WITH THIS INTERPRETATION.

4. EMBASSY PREVIOUSLY REPORTED (REF C) THAT "JUNTA
REPRESENTATIVE" MET WITH EDITORS OF SUSPENDED NEWSPAPERS
EVENING OF AUGUST 2, A MEETING WHICH RESULTED IN LIFTING

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OF SUSPENSION ORDERS. WE SURMISED ON BASIS CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE THAT PARTIES TO MEETING ARRIVED AT "GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT". WE HAVE SINCE LEARNED THAT TERM "JUNTA REPRESENTATIVE" WAS EXERCISE IN DISINFORMATION, INASMUCH AS PERSON INVOLVED WAS PRIME MINISTER GONCALVES. (SINCE DECREE-LAW ESTABLISHING AD HOC MEDIA COMMISSION MADE IT RESPONSIBLE TO JUNTA, PRIME MINISTER HAS NO LEGAL CONNECTION WHATEVER WITH COMMISSION'S WORK. HIS INTERCESSION IN THIS INSTANCE INDICATES THAT GOP TOOK POLITICAL DECISION, BEYOND COMPETENCE OF COMMISSION TO RESOLVE CRISIS.) EXISTENCE OF AGREEMENT HAS BEEN CONFIRMED IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF BY ASSISTANT EDITOR OF WEEKLY EXPRESSO.

5. ADDITIONAL INSIGHT INTO GOP'S MEDIA POLICY REVEALED BY REMARKS OF PRESIDENT SPINOLA AT AUGUST 7 SWEARING-IN CEREMONY OF, AMONG OTHERS, UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE LUIS DE BARROS (REF D). PRESIDENT OUTLINED AREA REQUIRING NEW OFFICIAL'S IMMEDIATE ATTENTION: "THE COUNTRY HAS BEGUN TO FEEL THAT WE CANNOT CONTINUE WITH THIS DISTURBED CLIMATE OF CONTINUOUS IDEOLOGICAL AGRESSION, A CLIMATE WHICH IS ACCEPTABLE ONLY DURING A PERIOD OF ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNING." THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS IN PORTUGAL, AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT'S PROGRAM, REQUIRE A CLOSE EXAMINATION OF ACTUAL MEDIA SITUATION IN WHICH THERE IS "SOMETHING WHICH IS PROFOUNDLY IN ERROR."

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6. COMMENT: IF IN FACT PRESS MANAGEMENT AND GOP ARE NOW WORKING HAND-IN-HAND, ONLY SOURCE OF EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION TO HOUSECLEANING PROGRAM LIES AMONG PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS THEMSELVES. IF THESE JOURNALISTS IDENTIFY THEIR INTERESTS WITH THOSE OF EXTREMISTS, UNITED OPPOSITION WOULD HAVE CAPABILITY OF EMBARRASSING GOP BY SHUTTING PAPERS DOWN. IF ON OTHER HAND THEY REFUSE TO CARRY TORCH FOR IDOLOGICALLY COMMITTED COMRADES, HOUSECLEANING OPERATION LIKELY TO PROCEED. ON BASIS OF INITIAL REACTIONS AT DIARO DE LISBOA (WHERE STAFF HAS REPORTEDLY VOTED 23 TO 8 IN FAVOR OF PROPOSAL IN ESSENCE SUPPORTING PAPER'S MANAGEMENT), WE WOULD JUDGE THAT MAJORITY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS WILL PURSUE LATTER COURSE OF ACTION.

7. "PROFESSIONAL" JOURANLISTS DISCUSSED ABOVE INCLUDE SIZEABLE NUMBER WHO ARE PCP MEMBERS AND SYMPATHIZERS. LIKE THE PCP ITSELF, THEY ARE NO DOUBT ANXIOUS TO GET CONFIDENTIAL

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RID OF FAR LEFT COLLEAGUES IN AND OUTSIDE OF DAILY PRESS WHO, IN TOTAL CURRENT POLITICAL PICTURE, HAVE BEEN ELEMENT MOST STRATEGICALLY PLACED TO CRITICIZE GOP (INCLUDING JUNTA, ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT. PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT) AND PCP'S POLICY OF TOTAL SUPPORT FOR IT. PCP HAS BEEN SHOWING ITS EXTREME SENSITIVITY TO CRITICISM (CRITICISM FROM RIGHT SUBJECT SEPTEL), AND IN THIS INSTANCE PARTY MAY HAVE ADOPTED MORE CATHOLIC STANCE THAN POPE (ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT) IN URGING TOP TO BEGIN JOURNALISTIC CLEANSING PROCESS. OPPOSITION BY SOCIALISTS, EVEN THOUGH PROMPTLY AND PUBLICLY EXPRESSED, IS EQUIVOCAL. WHILE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC ELEMENT (MOST SIZEABLE SEGMENT OF PARTY) UNDOUBTEDLY CONTAINS SOME PERSONS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN DEFENDING IDEAL OF "FREE SPEECH", MOST ARE UNSYMPATHETIC TO FAR LEFTISTS' CAUSE AND FEEL QUITE COMFORTABLE WITH HOUSECLEANING ACTION. MORE LEFTIST ELEMENTS OF PSP DO IDENTIFY WITH FAR LEFTISTS, HOWEVER, AND PARTY LEADERSHIP'S DESIRE TO RETAIN THEIR LOYALITIES (AND TO ATTRACT SUPPORT OF INDEPENDENT LEFTISTS IN SPRING ELECTIONS) MANDATES SOME GESTURE OF SOLIDARITY WITH THEM.
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